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ABSTRACT

Following historical background on the 46 School Library Systems in New York State, the following topics relating to the systems are discussed: (1) mandates set up for the systems by the State Board of Regents; (2) required 3-year Plans of Service which explain how the mandates will be carried out; (3) governance; (4) funding; (5) creation of automated catalogs; (6) access to serials; (7) interlibrary loan procedures; (8) delivery systems for interlibrary loans; (9) cooperative collection development; (10) promotion of awareness of resources and services among teachers and administrators; (11) staff development; and (12) achievements of the school library systems. The recommendations of a 1987 study of the school library systems by King Research are highlighted. (24 references) (MES)

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An Information-Sharing System for Students the New York Experience

Judith H. Higgins

18th IASL Conference
Subang Jaya, Malaysia
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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education, in the report titled A Nation at Risk, warned that formal education in the United States had deteriorated and that there was "a need to elevate the United States to the standard of a lifelong Learning Society."(Alliance, 1984, p. iii) The library and information science community responded in 1984 with a report titled Alliance for Excellence. One of its recommendations was ...that librarians at local, state and national levels develop and implement plans to share the resources and services of their institution in support of education and lifelong learning.(Alliance, 1984, p.37)

This was five years ago. In New York State, the school-library community was already deeply involved in a pilot program to provide just such resource sharing. Today that pilot program has spawned a full-blown network of 46 School Library Systems serving the nearly three million public and non-public school children of our state. It is a network dedicated to the theme of this Conference: the idea of the school library as a center for lifelong learning.

To understand the origins of the Systems, go back to 1950, "when the establishment of Public Library Systems in New York State was authorized by Education Law. By 1961, all counties in the state were included in Public Library Systems....In 1978, Reference and Research Library Resources Systems (RRLRS) were authorized by Education Law...

providing services to the research community....The RRLRS also serve as agents for coordination of the regional bibliographic database and interlibrary resource sharing grants."(Griffiths and King, 1989, p.1)

The idea of networking between public or research libraries and school libraries was given credence in 1978. The Board of Regents---16 private citizens who, with the Commissioner of Education, make educational policy for New York State---proposed legislation to encourage the sharing of school-library resources and to bring school libraries into the sharing process with all other types of libraries. (Barron, Interview)

The initial step came in 1979, with the funding of 12 pilot projects to establish links between individual schools in a geographic area and to bring them, in turn, into contact with both the public and the research library systems, usually referred to as "the 3Rs." Between 1979 and 1984, the pilot projects clearly demonstrated how resource sharing could improve student access to information.(Lasting, n.d.)

In 1984, grants of $20,000, Planning Grants, were made to each of the five big-city school districts and to the then 43 Boards of Cooperative Educational Services, which are regional education units created to offer shared services to the public schools. They are popularly known as the BOCES. These grants would lead to the establishment of

School Library Systems throughout the state.

The first full operational year of these Systems was 1985-86, and we are entering our fifth year of operationl. It has been my privilege to be a member of the original Council in one of the 41* BOCES School Library Systems and to serve as its Chair for the past two years.

It is now difficult to imagine life without these Systems. What Sive, in her excellent report on school-library networking, called the "unseen majority"(Sive, 1982, p. 1)---for school libraries account for two-thirds of America's libraries---is now a visible force in New York, a force with two prime objectives:

> One, to bring schools into the mainstream of library service in a large, diverse state.
>
> Two, to enable students, regardless of their grade level, their ability level, or the wealth and location of their school, to share in the library resources of New York State and, when appropriate, resources beyond the state's boundaries.

The student is no longer limited in his/her quest by a school library with an inadequate budget or by his/her own inability to visit a larger library collection. In the words of one of our students, students now the ability to access "real libraries."

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*Four of the BOCES have been merged since 1984, making the current total 41.

Much credit must be given to our state leaders. As early as the 1950's, Robert Barron, now Chief of the Bureau of School Library Media Programs in New York, but at that time a public librarian, had suggested integrating school libraries into the public-library systems. The reaction was invariably negative: "They will just be a drain on us." (Barron, Interview) Yet Barron and others like him persisted, and today in the State Education Department we have a unique level of cooperation between the Division of Library Development and the Bureau which Mr. Barron heads.

Every public and non-public school in New York State is eligible to be a participant in one of the School Library Systems, and all but 25 of our 719 public school districts belong, including "special act districts" which serve special populations such as the handicapped. There is no cost of the school district, except the time of the library staff of participate. Any schools which are non-participants are still invited to all activites.

Until the establishment of the Systems, school libraries were islands. The staff sometimes drew on local resources because they had established personal contact with the local public librarian, or, more rarely, with a college or university library. But on the whole, high-school students, and certainly elementary students, found their resources limited. They settled for what was there.

Those of us here today see students as clients who deserve resources equally as good as those demanded by adults. The fact is that they are not always treated that way when they venture out to those "real libraries." And they are geographically constrained. As Dyer noted a decade ago, "the single most compelling reason for including school libraries in national bibliographic systems and inter-library loan arrangements...is that the school librarian may be the only convenient access point for a given individual into an organized collection of knowledge...."(Dyer, 1979, p.461).

The Mandates

The Board of Regents in 1985 amended the New York State Education Law by adding Section 90.18 "School Library Systems." This section defined the Systems, described their governance and staffing, spelled out the functions of the System Coordinator---whose title is now Director---and set up the mandates for these Systems. The prime mandates are:

1. To create a union catalog of school-library resources, this data to be in a form (a full MARC record) which would be compatible with the databases of other library systems in the state.

2. To establish interlibrary loan policies and procedures to share requested material.

3. To establish effective delivery systems for inter-library loan.

4. To develop a cooperative collection development plan within each System.

5. To plan professional staff development through continuing-education activities.

6. To make librarians, teachers and administrators aware of the System's resources.

These mandates were to be executed by a full-time Director and a full-time clerk working with a volunteer Council of at least nine persons. Each Council must include representatives of the members of the School Library System and school administrators and of the public library system and the 3Rs system in the area. Council members would serve three-year terms, with one third of these members rotating off each year. They serve without compensation. In speaking with Systems Directors throughout the state, I found that our own experience was typical: the generosity of our public-library, college-library and 3Rs colleagues has been invaluable. They have come to innumerable meetings, provided wise counsel about automation, and generally been good friends as well as helpful colleagues.

The Plan of Service

Each System is required to provide a three-year Plan of Service which explains how these mandates will be carried out. The Commissioner's Regulations specify precisely what will be in those Plans of Service.(Excerpts, 1985, pp.41-42)

For example:

1. Identifying all school districts and non-public schools and their libraries within the service area of the School Library System and the means by which the System will encourage membership.

2. The policies and procedures to be used for selecting the Council members, to assure that it is broadly representative of both providers and users of library service.

3. The means of locating materials within the participants' libraries through a machine-readable catalog consistent with the standards for regional bibliographic databases.

4. Procedures for accepting, verifying and responding to interlibrary loan requests and a description of the delivery system for sharing these materials.

Governance

Although this was direction from the top down, the precise means for achieving these goals were not prescribed by the State Education Department. Each System was to act on its own, seeing the needs in its area, working with the existing library systems in its area, and using the technologies which seemed most logical to them in view of local conditions.

To those of you working in state-directed educational systems, this may seem an unusual amount of latitude. While jurisdiction over schools is given to the 50 states in the United States, in New York the tradition of local control is strong. Each city Superintendent of Schools or BOCES District Superintendent possesses a great deal of control over educational policy in his/her area, although the Superintendents themselves must be approved by the State Education Department and the Commissioner. So the state has

realistically taken a leadership role, setting the standards serving as the information locus, ready to offer consultation, but letting the troops in the field do the job.

The structure in place was the BOCES and the Boards of Education in our five large cities. The BOCES Superintendent, either on his/her own or with input from the Council or other advisors, would select the Director of each System. The BOCES or big-city system also acts as the fiscal agent for each System; that is, all State funds come through them, and it submits the required Plan of Service. A maximum of five percent of the System budget may go to the BOCES for administrative costs, such as housing the System office. In many cases, the BOCES or cities also absorb such costs as photocopying, mailing, and the use of an existing delivery system.

The Director's job is a staggering one: he/she must be certified both as a school library media specialist and as a school administrator and supervisor. In addition, computer expertise is essential, although not required by the State, and leadership skills are vital. He or she is also data-gatherer, budget-preparer and searcher for funds to augment the state's allocation.

While the Director and the clerk carry out the day-to-day work, the Council meets, by law, at least four times a year, and committees within the Council meet much more frequently. Our own Council currently includes the head of the Social Studies Department of a city school

district and the head of technical services for a branch of the State University of New York. In its early days, the Council was greatly aided by the advice of a computer coordinator from a member school district and the head of interlibrary loan for the public library system, as we went about choosing a bibliographic utility to set up our database.

The members of each School Library System are actually the districts, rather than the individual schools, except in the case of non-public schools. A representative of these schools is elected by that constituency and sits on the Council.

The links with each school district are the liaisons---librarians appointed to keep all the school librarians in each district informed of System plans and activities. At least two meetings of liaisons are required per year. Under the Regulations, member districts must allow these liaisons the time to attend these meetings.

Funding

The subject of funding is a sensitive one. In Fiscal 1988-89, New York State spent nearly $75 million on libraries and library systems.(Mattie, Interviews) Of this, $5.1 million was appropriated for the School Library Systems.

In 1985-86, the State Legislature had appropriated

$3.9 million. The allotment to each System was made on the basis of the total enrollment of public and non-public schools in each service area.

In the second year of operation, 1986-87, formula funding was introduced to take into account radical differences in the service areas. The Systems would now receive:

> a base grant, plus
> .19 per pupil member, plus
> $2.10 per square mile of their service area, plus
> $350.00 per member district.

This funding formula continues today. For many Systems, funding is the overriding problem they face. For the cost of salaries plus benefits for the Director and clerk in these Systems, which at first consumed about 50% of each budget, rose to nearly 70% in 1987-88, (SLS Final Budgets, Chart), leaving little, or in some case, nothing to carry out the service mandates. As on Director remarked, "The Mandates were laudable. They set high standards right at the start. But the funding has never been there."

The Results Thus Far

The first job of the Systems was the selection of a vendor for the creation of a MARC-standard union catalog for each System. The Councils and/or the Director had to choose a bibliographic utility and then decide what Dewey areas to

enter into the database first, to be of most use to the members. Within the state, six different vendors are being used.* As of June 1988, more than two million monographic titles had been entered in these databases, but an estimated 21 million records (holdings) remain to be entered. (Mattie, Interview)

In our own System, the Southern Westchester BOCES School Library System, the utility chosen was UTLAS, because it had already had experience with school-library clients and was also being used by both the local public-library system and our community college library. This decision-making process was described in a paper given at the 15th IASL Conference in Halifax.(Higgins and Wood, 1986)

The choice of vendor elsewhere was dictated by similar considerations: local experience, cost quoted, and the interest of the vendor at that time. All Systems sought what the Commissioner's Regulations had required: compatibility, that compatibility to be assured through a full MARC record.

The choice of what to enter first varied. We voted to enter the 300s and 900s, including biography and collective biography, first, and to enter only titles with a copyright date of 1980 or later.

This spring our liaisons voted to enter all titles in

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*Brodart, Marcive, OCLC, UTLAS, Bibliophile and the Mid-York Public Library System, in descending order of preference.

in the 900s regardless of copyright date, with the understanding that each school would weed its collection rigorously before sending in the required shelflist cards. At a cost of .80 per record, we cannot afford dead wood.

Other Systems proceeded differently. In Onondaga/Cortland/Madison, the current book acquisitions---fiction and non-fiction---of all schools were entered starting in September 1985. In addition, retrospective holdings in the 800s, regardless of copyright, were entered by all their high schools. In the Nassau School Library System, with the second largest enrollment in the State, literature, biography and selected history materials have been entered regardless of date.

In New York City, data entry was not by priority area. Instead, collections were chosen which appeared to have uniqueness and potential for interlibrary loan. After each collection was intensively weeded, the total holdings were entered, as are the new acquisitions of these schools. By June 1988, 183,000 unique entries, print and non-print, had been entered from 149 school libraries.

In all cases, the Systems headquarters must be apprised of new acquisitions in and withdrawals from their designated subject areas. This makes more work for us at the building level, but at the same time reduces the frustration of asking for a title since gone but still listed as held.

The goal of student access to this database is of prime

concern. Ideally, if the catalog is kept current and the money is forthcoming, we would all have a CD-ROM or online catalog. In fact, many of us have had to settle for much less, and for good reasons.

Computer terminals are not yet the rule in our school libraries. The money is simply not there. Two years ago we polled our System membership about the equipment in each library. Twice as many schools had microfiche readers as had computers. In a relatively affluent area, only eight schools have computerized circulation systems, and only five have automated catalogs in various stages of completion.

So despite our first Council's endorsement of an online catalog of our holdings, when several years had gone by without giving the schools access to what they had sent in, we decided to pay for the production of a COMCAT (Computer Output Microfiche Catalog). Each member district received one copy. Each entry in this dictionary-format catalog includes the code or codes of the holding library or libraries.

In other BOCES Systems, the story has been different. For example, the Albany-Schoharie-Schenectady School Library System, one of the original 12 pilot programs, had a microfiche and CD-ROM format. Today it is also part of a CD-ROM regional database catalog. This will hold 1.5 million records from three public library systems and most of the area's academic and special libraries as well as the records

of the four School Library Systems.

As of June 1988, 11 Systems provided online access to monographs, three had paper catalogs, five offered CD-ROM and the majority, 36, offered microfiche to their members. (Member Access)

Access to Serials

As students achieve better access to periodical citations through CD-ROM indexes and online searching, the number of requests for magazines has grown tremendously. I suspect that periodical budgets have not. So access to magazines through union lists of periodicals is essential.

The first step was to find out what schools already held. Each school was asked to send in its list of periodical holdings and the information was meshed. Simple union lists in paper form were quickly put together and distributed to the members. In 1987, our own Council voted to take part in a paper regional list of all public, academic, and school libraries in our county. This became a three-volume work, with new holding codes based on OCLC designations. But serials come and go, and space for keeping back issues may be limited. We needed a more current list. Our Director asked our 3Rs System, METRO, to produce a list of the holdings of our own and the two adjacent School Library Systems. For reasons of economy, a number of Systems have developed these merged union lists.

The value of this decision was brought home to me recently when an eighth grader chose as her topic for magazine research "How to Take Care of Your Horse." Ours is a District where the pick-up truck is far commoner than the horse. Using Wilsondisc, we found just the right article, in a magazine called Blair and Ketchum's Country Journal. Only one school, in the System just to the north where horse-owning is more common, held that magazine. Two days later she had the article.

Interlibrary Loan

From the point of view of libraries fearful that we would overrun them, the good news is that 85 to 90 percent of the interlibrary loans currently being made by school libraries are handled within their own School Library Systems. The number of items requested has increased from 64 thousand in 1985-86, the first year of the Systems, to 169 thousand for the 1987-88 year. (School Library System Growth). In our own System, with 33 member districts and 46 non-public schools, the number of items requested and loaned grew from 880 in 1985-86 to 3069 in 1987-88.

As union catalogs have grown, so has potential access to other collections. Interlibrary loan may may well be the most important service element of the Systems, both to students and to their teachers. All libraries have some unique titles to share, especially important as books now go

out-of-print rapidly. One speculates that the small, isolated school may benefit the most, for a union catalog and a successful delivery system now gives it access to collections which were geographically and financially impossible five years ago. In Lansing, New York for example, a student determined to do a paper on Coco Chanel despite her high school's limited resources, did just that. The System produced books from three different college libraries.

On the inter-school level, loan may be done by phone, in writing or by electronic bulletin board for those libraries with phones, modems and communications software. It will soon be done by FAX (facsimile machine) between the Buffalo School Library System office and one of its high schools. The particular high school was chosen because it had a consistent periodical collection and because it had become a "net lender" to smaller colleges in the Buffalo area. The Buffalo System Director believes that it is important for her System to be able to lend as well as borrow: "It's a matter of pride for us to do our share. We don't want to be the poor relations in the State Library System."(Hetzler, Telephone Interview)

With regional union lists of serials now in existence throughout the state, we are able to request materials from a college or public library, particularly when highly individualized assignments are given to upper-level

students. If the need is for a magazine article and the location is known, the school librarian fills out the standard American Library Association ILL request form, includes a label and mails it.

If a book is needed, the union catalog database is consulted first. If it is limited to schools and no school holds that title, the request goes to System headquarters. Hopefully, the title, author and imprint are correct. The clerk or Director accesses whatever databases are available to them and searches for libraries holding that title. If the title is not to be found, the request goes to the regional Clearinghouse designated by the 3Rs system and they obtain the title either within the region or from the State Library or beyond.

Sometimes the search may go far beyond, and the student or teacher is dazzled by our new resources. A technology teacher needs to examine a specific textbook he is considering for a new curriculum; there is no examination center for texts in our area. When a search of New York libraries did not turn it up, the Clearinghouse checked the OCLC database. Within two weeks the book came in from an Ohio university.

With so much interlibrary loan going on, much of it done by clerical staff, procedural guidelines already exist is some areas. This fall a committee from our own Council will come up with ILL guidelines to clarify when point-to-point borrowing is appropriate, to ensure that citations are

complete, and to see that one lender with good resources is not overburdened with requests.

All of us have the challenge of educating students to plan ahead, and I hope this is an easier task in your part of the world than it is in New York. Beatrice Angus, a System Director whose area contains 10 rural or small-city school districts but covers 756 square miles, has put it well: "The students now have a responsibility to plan so that we have the time to get the material for them."(Angus, Telephone Interview) The student who comes up with a dozen magazine citations only to learn that we carry only six of the magazines need not go away discouraged if he or she gives us lead time."

The Delivery System

Knowing that a book or article exists is half the battle; the other half is getting it to the student, especially to the younger, less mobile student. A description of the delivery system must be included in each System's Plan of Service, and the Systems have responded ingeniously. While photocopies of articles can be mailed, books are delivered by United Parcel Service, by school-district bus drivers and by student couriers, sometimes students who attend BOCES educational programs. The delivery system may also be informal; e.g., the director or clerk will drop off a book on the way home, or items may be exchanged at Council

meetings or workshops.

The frequency of delivery may be daily, bi-weekly or weekly. In addition, the Systems interlock with the delivery systems of the public and 3Rs libraries, since it may be faster for them to send a book to a System office on their truck than to risk the U.S. mail. In our System, material is sent out with the film and video delivery service once a week. Schools who do not get this service get a book through United Parcel or by mail.

Cooperative Collection Development

The mandate for each System to develop a plan for cooperative collection development has been followed in varying degrees. In New York City, there were already strong special collections in some schools. Forty-nine special collections, including both print and non-print, now exist, ranging from Biology at the famed Bronx High School of Science to Asian Countries at Seward Park High School and Fashion and Costume at the High School of Fashion Industries.

Far to the northwest of the city, the Madison-Oneida System has gone in two directions: first, there is coordinated collection of monographs in the area of literature and literary criticism, the topic chosen by its members. And they have also designated depository libraries for periodicals already held by members. This provides in-depth coverage of selected titles in the Readers' Guide and in Children's Magazine Index. About one-quarter of the Systems

have plans for cooperative collection of monographs as well as serials.

Other examples of CCD are in the Monroe 2-Orleans System, where the members decided to concentrate on two areas: Spanish Language and Cultures and Economics; and in the Albany System, where the Council and Director decided to concentrate on the seventh and eighth-grade requirements under the "Regents Action Plan" which mandated library-resource time for students in all of their subjects. Eleven junior-high schools agreed to weed their collections, assess their strengths and weaknesses, and collect in each of the eleven subject areas needed, in addition to producing bibliographies to share.

There has been no special funding for cooperative collection development. Instead, the schools which agree to participate agree to collect in a special area and continue to collect, knowing that another school can and will support them with in-depth material in a different subject area. It does not supplant building a core collection, but it assures the members that somewhere nearby there are materials in-depth on the subject which, with advance warning, may be borrowed to broaden the number of resources available.

In fact, most systems have chosen serials as their first effort in cooperative collection development. In Southern Westchester, our CCD committee members met over dinner. First, we polled all schools, elementary and

secondary, to determine what serials they would like to have available but currently do not. The number of responses from the elementary libraries was heartening, because these libraries sometimes feel that many System activities are not really for them.

At our next dinner, the Director unfurled a spreadsheet listing names of serials and names of schools which had expressed an interest in them. Some were standard collection-development tools, such as Children's Catalog or Ulrich's; we agreed that these should be held at the System office. Any serial title which two or more schools had requested was considered for CCD. Using our union list, we checked what school held each periodical at least five years. The Director will now contact 17 schools, asking if each one will continue to purchase one---or in rare cases, two---magazines they now hold. We are following the path taken by other Systems in building on existing strengths.

Awareness of Resources and Services

Until the Systems were formed, we were all but invisible to some teachers and administrators. Plan of Service mandate number eleven was to include, but not be limited to, "the procedures for promoting awareness among system members and participants."(Excerpts, 1985, p. 42) With the visit of the School Library System Director and work on the part of the liaisons, many principals and

Superintendents became aware we existed. When these Systems offered database searching or brought new technology into their buildings on loan (at no cost), we went up a notch in their estimation. The Director's role as consultant is invaluable; schools looking for help now know where to turn. It is he or she who is able to get out to important local, state and national meetings and learn of programs or technical developments which will help building-level librarians and teachers.

The Director is also the conduit for information from public and academic libraries or their systems. Children's and young-adult book reviews done collectively for public libraries in our County are now circulated to us. We are hoping to have the collections of new books upon which these reviews are based put in a central location for our members to examine. Joint programs with public librarians or members of adjoining School Library Systems are held, and, with financial support from each System, stronger programs can be presented. One of our most successful programs this year, on the subject of picture books, was co-sponsored with the education department of a local college and the public library system and featured Ethel Heins, former editor of the Horn Book magazine.

Mandate twelve in the Plan of Service requires a description of "procedures for encouraging communication among members and participants regarding effective practices and

cooperative projects."(Excerpts, 1985, p. 42) For each System, this has meant a newsletter sent to all members either directly or through the liaison. These newsletters, which are published more or less regularly, include calendars of local, regional, state and national library meetings; lists of recommended professional reading or new media; explanations of topics such as MARC records or Local Area Networks (LANS); news of state legislation for libraries; graduate courses of interest to school librarians; reports on what is new in automation; and articles on new professionals in the System. A recent issue of the newsletter from the Erie 2-Chattauqua-Cattaraugus System gave the responses from a member survey which had asked, "How do you use computers?", followed by an article enjoining laggards to get going and suggesting some computer software to start with in each curriculum area.

Outside of interlibrary loan, the System's prime value to the building-level person may well be making him/her aware of resources. We are too often bogged down in the minutiae of school life. We need to be made aware of resources the System has purchased or demonstrations and loans of new CD products it has arranged, or invitations to important workshops put on by other systems.

At last, the small district, because of its membership, has access to information and has clout. And at last, the building person has an advocate to make each individual

Superintendent and each Board of Education aware of what kind of library services can be provided if they will lend their support.

Staff Development

The Plan of Service also required a statement of how the System would "assure continuing needs assessment and program development, including staff development needs. (Excerpts, 1985, p. 42) Staff development was and is a crucial area because of the isolation of school-library professionals. Hitherto, we were on our own, designing our own "continuing education."

With the advent of the Systems, committees from the memberships or Councils addressed the problem, and nowhere perhaps more systematically within than in the suburban Nassau School Library System. In recognition, this System was co-recipient of the American Association of School Librarians/ABC-Clio Leadership Development Award in 1988.

With 56 school districts and 207 librarian members, Nassau had always turned out many people for its full-day staff development meetings, but the speakers seemed to have no impact on the way that the librarians performed their jobs in their schools. Using $194 left in the System budget in 1986, Director Carol Kroll surveyed the members and identified "a general feeling of discontent about the lack of regard for media specialists and about the way they were

treated at the school site."(Tewell and Kroll, p. 245)

Kroll and Dr. Kenneth J. Tewel of Queens College/CUNY decided to assemble a planning team of interested librarians to review the survey, target goals for staff development and suggest strategies for reaching those goals. Over the summer of 1986, fifteen school librarians met, complaining that administrators ignored them or did not consider them part of the school's professional community and had no knowledge of how to use them as a resource. Research with principals and other administrators confirmed these complaints.

The planning team decided that the first job in staff development was to reframe the librarians' view of themselves so they did not feel ineffectual. They must become proactive rather than reactive.

Briefly, the planning team divided Nassau County into regional clusters, each cluster to be led by two facilitators who took part in two leadership-training sessions to enable them to address group concerns. In all-day sessions, the facilitators concentrated on skills which would make the librarians proactive. The cluster groups then met, working with five simulated situations in which their strategies to become proactive were developed. One of these sessions featured a talk on teachers' and administrators' views of librarians and how library professionals can re-position themselves in the school power structure.

Kroll noted some immediate outcomes. Foremost was a marked increase in support for the librarians by district Superintendents. And the librarians became active. Two of them taught a course on the use of library management software; in-service courses on critical thinking skills and one on the uses of storytelling were requested and offered; and a group of elementary librarians organized their own committee to design a new course for a local university. At the same time, the building people became more involved in their own districts and better able to lobby on behalf of their programs.

In other Systems, staff development took other directions. In Monroe 2-Orleans, a documents librarian from the University of Rochester spoke on "Government Publications for the School Library Media Center." In our System, a member with a keen interest in online searching taught an in-service course which attracted not only our own members but classroom teachers. More recently, we brought in an academic librarian from Boston to discuss that most loathsome but necessary of tasks, weeding the collection, and we hope to bring in subject specialists from public or academic libraries to help us refine this process.

Tangentially, I should like to mention a project which has not only helped us develop professionally but has given our upper-level students (and some teachers) direct and continuous help. Our enterprising Director made it possible

for any library with a computer and a modem and telephone to access a regional database system called Multi-PALS. Offered by the Information Services Division of our County government, Multi-PALS has eight databases. The three most used by high schools are the book collections in 12 academic libraries and one centrally-located public library; a database of local-news articles from local newspapers and the New York Times; and the union list of serials described earlier, but updated.

With a minimum of fuss, the student can do an author, title, subject, or term search on the subject of his/her research paper. Because we are near the community college, this is the book collection of choice, and at the present time the student can also hit "DS" for Display Status to find out if the book is on the shelf or if it is circulating. If it is in, typing in his/her Social Security number ensures that the book will be held for seven days. Usually, of course, the student needs it immediately and gets to the library sooner.

I mention Multi-PALS because it has developed not only my faculty's knowledge of resources outside our walls but our student' sense of what is out there. And because, thanks to our Director's skilled negotiations, we were able to subscribe to this group of databases for a flat fee of less than $200 a year, with no limitations on the amount of use.

The Achievements

The achievements of the School Library Systems may be measured in several ways:

In numbers, there were more than 2 million monographic titles in the databases in machine-readable form as of June 1988, and more than 26,000 serial titles in the union catalogs.

In terms of day-to-day achievements, the Systems have:

1. Helped put phones in libraries where there were no phones.
2. Improved the professional status of the librarian. In Robert Barron's words, "In the building, he or she has provided new services and is now seen as an important part of the educational team, someone who can do things for them."(Barron, Interview)
3. Advanced their members technically so that we now know, or know how to find out, what a particular technology can do for us to give us more time with students. Whether we can afford it is another issue.
4. Insured that each one of us does not have to reinvent the wheel. We are not individually seeking the same information from other libraries, from vendors, publishers, or the State Education Department.

5. Provided power, through numbers, which the individual building person has never had. This includes obtaining group rates and System-wide demonstrations of new products. Districts also have the option of buying into a shared-service plan for circulation and OPACs for students.
6. Helped us serve faculty better, by making their professional research more successful.
7. Given us more time with students. They are the reason for our work. As Angus points out, "With the Systems, library research becomes a positive experience for the student."(Angus, Telephone interview)

While many resources existed before the Systems did, they were not easy to access. The student who wanted articles on suicide among teenagers for a mandated health-education course had to plow through volume after volume of the Readers' Guide searching for articles with that focus only. In one search mode of Wilsondisc, the two terms can be combined and in minutes the citations for the articles, if they exist, will appear. Standard assignments are becoming more interesting, not only because of the computer but because we have reduced the frustration level: we can readily get almost any material students turn up.

None of us will ever have everything a student wants. Even drawing on neighboring schools may not do the job. But the students are learning that we are connected to the out-

side world. Our success with them was evident when a third-grader in upstate New York asked an elementary librarian, "Can you get this book on interplanetary loan?"

The King Research Systems Study

To chart the future directions of all the library systems in New York, in 1987 the Division of Library Development commissioned King Research Inc. of Rockville, Maryland to conduct a study of all 76 library systems through interviews of all systems' directors, regional meetings, and surveys of randomly chosen members. Their findings and recommendations were released last month.

> Their major finding was no news to us: School Library Systems are not providing some services (that they should be providing) to any libraries...In our judgement we feel that SLS are the most underfunded type of Library System. SLS are not funded at a sufficient level to provide the services they are mandated to perform and they could perform many library operational functions for school libraries with the potential of substantial savings.(Griffiths and King, 1989, p. 21)

The study has made a number of recommendations and I shall highlight only a few:

1. That, unlike other states which have included schools in multitype library systems if they wished to be included, New York maintain the three separate types of systems because each system is enhanced by focusing on the special needs and requirements of their member libraries.

2. That Council members should be trained to understand the economic issues and the statistical methods of system operations and services.

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3. That funding formulas take into account the number of member libraries (participants), which they currently do not.

4. That education law should specify that there is a special relationship between School Library Systems and the BOCES---that the Directors should not be considered merely another BOCES employee. Rather, the SLS Directors should at minimum be given authority and responsibility for budgets.

5. That coordination of services and cooperation among types of library systems should take place through Intersystem Cooperative Networks (ICONS) in which each of the three types of member libraries would have equal votes.

6. That union lists should be online or on CD-ROM and ultimately there must be a statewide union list of holdings directly accessible by all libraries, assuring equality of access.

7. Noting that a source of antagonism in the past has been the assignment of the responsibility for distributing regional automation funds to the 3Rs systems, the study recommends that the division of funds should be made on the basis of pre-determined formulas or should be determined by New York State. (Griffiths and King, 1989, pp. 18-22)

The Reality

We do not have a perfect system, but it is a unique one in its extent, its aims and its achievements thus far. Barbara Imroth, Associate Professor at the University of Texas and an authority on school-library networks, recently said,"Your system is good because you have had a lot of state leadership and a high level of development. The fact that you have a full-time coordinator and a delivery system is way ahead of everyone else."(Imroth, Telephone Interview)

Excellent planning at the state level, hard work on the part of both the Division of Library Development and the

Bureau of School Library Media Programs, long days by talented SLS Directors, and thousands of volunteers hours by school librarians and librarians from the public and 3Rs systems have overcome many of the barriers to resource sharing which were so aptly noted in Information Power. These were: legal restrictions, staff time, planning time, networking costs and inequities among school librarier. Challenge Five of that document was "To participate in networks that enhance access to resources outside the schools." (Information Power, p. 12) I think I speak for many school-library professionals throughout New York State when I say we have met that challenge and continue to meet it.

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